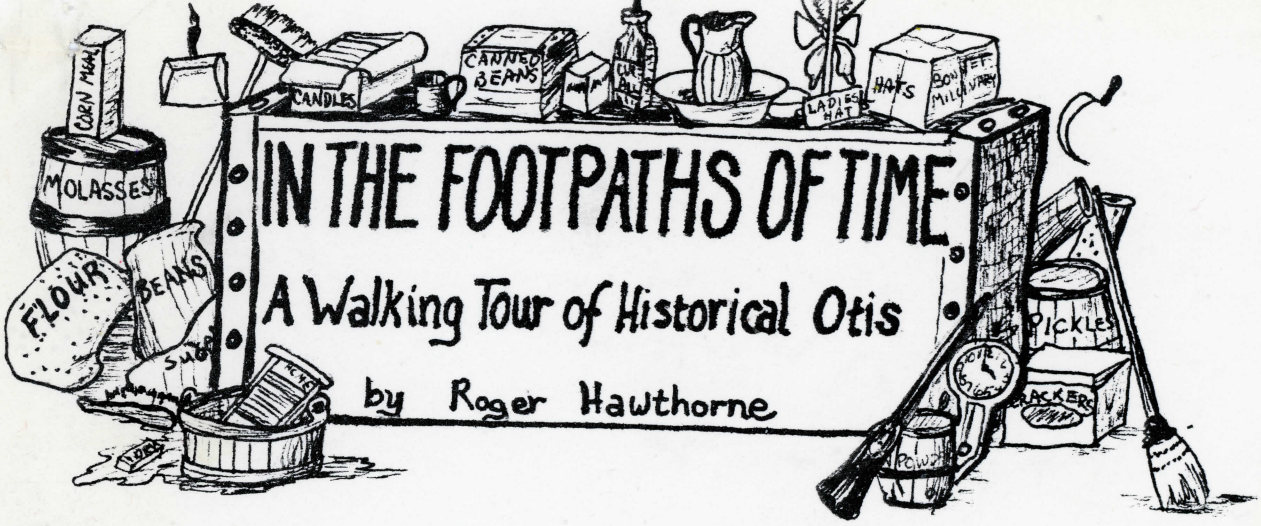


IN THE FOOTPATHS OF TIME

A Walking Tour of Historical Otis

by Roger Hawthorne



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A TOUR THROUGH OTIS OF THE 1880'S AND 1890'S

FOREWORD AND INTRODUCTION

Start on the west side of Otis by standing in the roadside park facing south toward the tracks. Let your imagination take you back in time, back to January, 1882. Strip away the tracks, the roadbed of the railroad, all the buildings, all the trees, all the fields, all the roads. All that is before you in any direction you look is the native prairie--and maybe some long-horn cattle; look long enough, hard enough, you might even see some buffalo--for some were still around then, though not many because they were being mercilessly hunted. It was a far cry from the day in 1878 when a wandering cowboy got stranded on Cap Rock--possibly the cowboy name for the sandstone feature just west of Fremont Butte--and a passing buffalo herd prevented his going on down to his ranch on the South Platte River all day. From ten in the morning until dark, the buffalo streamed by in a continuous flow; by the mid 1800's it was estimated there might be 15-20 buffalo left in the entire country. However, this January day in 1882, there are a few more buffalo than that around, and you are apt to see them for scattered around the countryside are collections of water; today we would call those water collections "lagoons," but back then they were called "lakes," and some did not dry out year to year as today's lagoons do. It was a very wet time; rainfall throughout most of the 1880's ran nearly double normal, and the rainfall here was akin to the rainfall on the western edges of the Missouri River valley. That abundant moisture of the 1880's would eventually seduce many people to come to this area to practice the style of farming they did in much wetter areas of the nation. Not one of them would make it as a farmer in those days before they learned about dryland farming techniques, but they did not know they were programmed for failure when they came here. But this year of 1882 was wet, and could you attain sufficient height to gaze out upon the land, you would notice three rather substantial sized lakes between this spot and the Burdett area, the largest covering two sections about five miles east and north.

Gaze again to the south and look closely at the land a few rods in front of you, and you will see surveying stakes pounded into the earth. They mark the future line of the Burlington and Missouri railroad being flung westward from Red Willow, Nebraska, the Burlington's reply to Jay Gould's attempt to swallow up the Burlington. The Burlington intends

to have rail service into Denver by July, 1882. This very wintry day as you stand in this spot, the railroad's graders have crossed the Nebraska state line and are somewhere near that spot which will become known as Laird, Colorado. They will reach here in February, 1882. They are in a hurry. George Holdredge of the Burlington and Missouri has been put in charge of construction, and he is determined to reach Denver ahead of schedule--and the schedule itself calls for a murderous rate of speed in the construction. East of a spot which will become known by his name, a man named Yuma is killed in an accident involving the graders; west of Akron eight men will be killed in an accident in the cut through the ridge and their bodies would be tumbled in unmarked graves alongside the railroad. Those are the known fatalities building this railroad line so hastily; there were others. The graders are not even putting down a road bed, just scraping the earth more or less flat; there would be time enough later to come back to build roadbed to smooth out the ride. Early passengers likened the ride to a sea cruise, up and down, up and down, being jolted this way and that; many suffered seasickness as they rode the rails.

The first week of March, 1882 the tracklayers reach this point, and though it is far less than clear, it seems they at that time put in a siding and built a stockyard corral and loading chutes. That siding would be named Otis, and it is anyone's good guess why. One guess, however, will be terribly wrong: that siding was not named Otis after Dr. William D. Otis, an early physician and newspaper publisher who would come to Otis only in 1887, the first time he had been west of Ohio. It is so unlikely that one may as well say "impossible" the railroad named this spot "Otis" in honor of a man who was nowhere near this place until five years after it was named. After building the siding, the corral and the loading chutes, the tracklayers hastened their way west. Holdredge in time will start another crew of tracklayers working their way east out of Denver, laying down the first steel rails manufactured in Colorado; the two crews would meet somewhere northeast of Denver in May, 1882, and four days later the first freight train thundered through. Passenger service had to wait until late June: the track had been laid so fast that the railroad had not had time to build depots and eating establishments for passengers. For the speed of the construction, Holdredge was promoted, given a substantial bonus, honored with the symbolic silver spike driven as the last spike, and had a Nebraska town named for him. The railroad, however, did not even mark

the graves of the at least nine men whose lives were lost building that railroad line. Incidently, they were paid $1.25 a day for working sunup until sundown, seven days a week.

At first the railroad had a very simple method to determine where to locate its depots--and water wells. They put a depot and well wherever the steam locomotive would next need water. It is an uphill grade from somewhere in Nebraska to the cut west of Akron, and the grade dictated that the locomotives needed water roughly every 20 miles or so. Thus at first there were depots and wells at Eckley, Hyde and Akron. Since there were no other facilities around, the railroad also constructed bunkhouses for its section crews in those locations. It is not known at what point the railroad added an eating establishment in Akron, nor the distance to the next eating establishment east to west. Certainly by the mid 1880's the Burlington had a Burlington House restaurant at Akron.

The railroad left some limited development in its wake. George Work settled on a quarter section immediately north of Otis on the east side of the Sterling highway; back in 1882, you could see his claim shack from where you stand. His nearest neighbors were Lewis and Laura Wing who had the quarter section immediately east of Hyde. In 1884 some few other settlers came in, but that was about it.

The reason people did not come had everything to do with those long-horn cattle you could see scattered all over the plains in 1882 when about one million cattle roamed the plains east and south of the South Platte all the way down to the Arickaree and Republican. It was the day of the open cattle range, the era when cattle barons laid fraudulent claim to vast areas of the public domain--and made their claims stick at the point of their cowboys' six-shooters. Up in Nebraska Print Olive hauled a couple settlers out, strung them up, shot them, burned their bodies and lopped off their arms and legs; he was convicted for it, but had the conviction overturned. Following the rail line into Colorado meant crossing Olive land. Cowboys of Jared Brush's operation, he for whom the Colorado community was named, had driven a herd to ship out on the Burlington back in 1880 when the Burlington still hovered around Hastings, Nebraska. The herd got into a farmer's field, destroying his year-long labor; staring at the guns riding low on the cowboys' waists, the farmer accepted fifty cents payment for the damages. Bruce Johnson, another baron, claimed the Nitzen Springs and his cattle roamed this area freely, or

at least marginally so. Colorado ranchers had illegally fenced millions of acres of the public domain; to settle upon the public domain meant cutting the ranchers' fence and answering to the ranchers' cowboys. If one survived to appeal to the law, he found the law was owned by the ranchers.

That changed in August, 1885 when the President of the United States of America, Grover Cleveland, ordered the U. S. Army to assist the U. S. Land Office in tearing down illegally erected fences and in throwing out fraudulent land claims. The barons had their men file alleged homestead claims on land bordering every natural source of water in the country, an acre or so deep, 160 acres long along a stream bed; control of the water gave control of the land beyond the water. The barons and their men could face down unarmed farmers accompanied by their wives and children; they dared not tackle the U. S. Army.

Suddenly the country was open for settlement, and the settlers poured in. Colorado required a year's residency in order to vote. In 1885 about 20 men (women could only vote in school board elections) voted in a precinct which started a mile east of Yuma and ran seven miles west of Akron. In 1886 that precinct had been divided into three precincts centered on Akron, Hyde and Yuma; in the Akron precinct alone, over 150 men voted.

People began to arrive in the Otis vicinity in the fall of 1885 and they quickly petitioned for a post office. Toward the end of 1885, the petition acknowledged that there was no existing village, but the proposed post office would serve about 30 families--a rather charitable estimation of the number of families in the area that early, but the U. S. Post Office approved establishment of the post office early in January, 1886. Since there was no depot, the mail had to be hauled by horse or wagon to Otis from Hyde.

One of the 1885 arrivals was a man named George W. Dade, originally from Hastings, Nebraska. He filed a pre-emption claim on the southeast quarter of Section 9, Township 2 North, Range 50 West. If that legal description means nothing to you, try it this way: standing in the roadside park in Otis means you are practically on the southern limit of that quarter section which starts at the intersection of the Akron and Sterling highways and goes a half mile west and a half mile north. Whether he meant to start a town is a bit of a problem to figure out. Rather early in 1886 the James Pruyn family of Hastings had built a feed

and seed store on Dade's land; George W. Cameron who had filed on the quarter section half a mile west and a mile north of Dade's claim had opened a jewelry and watch repair shop on Dade's land; Bartan Harlaw had established a newspaper known as the "Otis Enterprise," and it, too, was located on Dade's land. In May, 1886 Samuel and Marilla Hoopes built a drugstore on Dade's land. However, in August, 1886 when Dade went to prove up on his pre-emption, he ran into some sort of difficulty and in order to secure title to the land, he then decided to avail himself of a seldom used provision in U. S. Land laws which allowed a would-be land owner to claim a quarter section if he dedicated a quarter of the quarter section as a government townsite. Dade pressed the law to the limit, in part because of the already existing development. His First Avenue actually was located in another section altogether, and his survey wound up with 13 lots 25 feet wide in the blocks bordering First Avenue--to accomodate the "Otis Enterprise" building--while the next tier of blocks to the north ran only 12 lots 25 feet wide.

It was more than a little difficult to get a community going in this location--because there was no well large enough to serve the people who had poured in even before a town had been surveyed. The Burlington obliged the people by bringing in a tank car full of water periodically and parked it on the siding until another load of water was needed, but the Burlington also charged for it. In May, 1886 Dade and the other residents hired Yeaman Brothers of Akron to dig a well and install a wind mill for a town well; Yeamans had to sue all of them to get paid for their work. Every winter the well went dry and had to be dug deeper. Moreover, there was no depot although the citizens kept petitioning the railroad to build a depot and schedule Otis as a stop.

The citizens should have known what the problem was in getting a depot. Follow the Burlington's lines from eastern Nebraska into Colorado, Wyoming and Montana, lines travelling through literally hundreds of communities--and not over a handful of those communities were ever started by any one or any outfit other than the Lincoln Land Company, the railroad's own township developer. Dade's development theoretically was owned at first by the Weld County court and later by the Washington County court, but apart from the mythology of the court's ownership, Dade's development clearly was not a Lincoln Land Company development, which meant the railroad would not make a penny in assisting Dade develop his town.

The first postmaster was also the first grocer who had his store where

Halcomb's now live, 101 E. 1st--and that is the southwest quarter of Section 10, Township 2 North, Range 50 West. That gentleman was named Erastus Orren Seeley, and in February, 1887 he had a survey completed and filed a plat with Washington County setting aside the southwestern 40 acres of that quarter section as the "Railroad Addition," a name which would lead the casual reader to assume it was to be an addition to Dade's Town of Otis development. However, look at the plat again. A half block wide north to south was left unplatted--the strip of land where Seeley's store stood, i.e. the two developments did not even adjoin each other. Moreover, in the midst of this alleged addition was provision for a business district to be built on 25 feet wide lots.

It is not known if any of the residents in the Town of Otis, Dade's development, ever saw the plat of the Railroad Addition. Probably the first clue they had that anything was up was when the railroad finally relented and built a depot--a quarter mile east of the nearest development on Dade's land, but due south of Seeley's proposed business district. If that was not sufficient clue, the rest came out in June, 1887 when Seeley deeded half his lots to the Lincoln Land Company.

The war was on, pitting George W. Dade against the resources of the Lincoln Land Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Burlington railroad system, backed by East Coast financial tycoons. In order to attract businessmen over from Dade's development, Seeley would put up business buildings and sell them and the lots to anyone moving over for the actual cost of the building alone. Meanwhile, the Lincoln Land Company used its lots to exchange straight across for similar sized lots in Dade's development, and sometimes the Lincoln Land Company would throw in some cash, too.

By the end of 1887, the war was over. Dade fled back to Hastings while all the businessmen (and women) still located in his development agreed with Seeley and the Lincoln Land Company to move over into the Railroad Addition. Truly it was the railroad's addition!

Ironically Dade was the only one who made money in the development of Otis. In the fall of 1887 the Washington County court bestowed title to over 100 lots upon Dade, and he took those titles with him when he returned to Hastings, and back in Nebraska, he found buyers for them. By the end of 1888, he had grossed over $7,000 from the sale of Otis town lots and had completely terminated his Otis holdings. In 1894 the Lincoln Land Company

vacated all the lots it could, those on the outer edges of Dade's development, in an effort to reduce its tax burden--and then the company walked out on its tax bills letting the county acquire tax title on all its holdings. In 1914 the Lincoln Land Company handed over its deed register to Washington County, having made no effort since 1894 to reclaim title to any of the lots it had once controlled in either the Railroad Addition or the Original Town of Otis. The company had advanced more money to Seeley than ever it reclaimed from the relative few lot sales it had. Seeley had dumped all his lots on the company when he cleared out in 1892.

Dade probably laughed all the way to the bank.

Now let us go for a walk around town to see how it looked in the 1880's and 1890's. Along the way, we will actually see a couple of the buildings from then, one whole, one in part. For convenience, we are taking this walk geographically, not chronologically, but as we walk, keep in mind that very nearly every business you will see on the western side of Otis relocated to Washington Street in eastern Otis in 1888. Years later those who were children in the early years would marvel how many empty foundations remained after the town collapsed in the 1890's; what they never knew was that many of those foundations were already empty in 1888, some as early as 1887, and not from any agricultural disaster but simply because the buildings were moved from the west side to the east side. At its height, Otis was estimated to have a population of 150; families in those days typically had 4-6 children, so a population of 150 represented somewhere between 20 to 30 families. You will not see that many houses as we walk along, in part because records do not show if a lot owner built a house on his own lot hence there is no way to know if a house was there unless the owner sold it, but also in part because there simply were not many houses. Merchants tended either to live in their stores or in houses on their land claims. Seeley, developer of the Railroad Addition, lived upstairs over his store; so did the druggist, Samuel Hoopes. Dr. William D. Otis might have kept a cot in the back of his newspaper office, but by and large he lived on his land claim. Dade himself apparently never had a business or home in town, but rather lived elsewhere on his quarter section. Will Hayes, a cafe owner, later a grocery store owner, always lived in the country as did James Biddlecom, a barber. The list could go on, but that is enough to establish that there were few houses in town and while not necessarily every house can be identified, most of them can be. A very few businesses were identified which could not be located because their owners leased lots, and there are no records of rentals or leases.

A TOUR THROUGH OTIS OF THE 1880'S AND 1890'S

BLOCK 9, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

As originally platted, this was a full block, lying between 1st and 2nd on the south and north, and bounded by a projected Otis Street on the west and Dungan Street on the east. To its west was a projected tier of half blocks running south to north facing on to Otis Street. The western half of Block 9 and all the blocks north of it plus all the half blocks west of Otis Street were Dade lots which eventually passed into the control of the Lincoln Land Company and were vacated in 1894, which is why Otis Street never was built.

On the corner of 1st and Dungan stood the livery stables owned by Harvey and Levi Hodge. Harvey Hodge also owned the two corner lots on 2nd and Dungan. This stable eventually was relocated to the site where today's Presbyterian Church stands on the corner of 2nd and Weld. It is possible Harvey may have had a house on the corner, but not too likely. The two brothers had land claims three miles east and one mile north of Otis. (All such measurements are taken from the intersection of the Sterling and Akron highways where four sections join.)

Incidently, if you look at today's street sign, you will see that sign says this is "Duncan Street." Dade named it "Dungan" in honor of the Rev. George W. Dungan, founder of the first church in town, the Congregational Church. Dungan is buried in the Otis cemetery, and for more information about him, you might wish to obtain a copy of the Recreation Department's booklet, "Lest They Be Forgotten: A Guide to Old Otis Graves."

THE WESTERN HALF, BLOCK 5, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

We are standing in the western half of Block 5 when we stand in the roadside park. The first 50 feet, or two 25 foot lots, which constitute the roadside park were originally purchased by Noah R. Pratt from Dade; Pratt lived on his land claim due west of Dade's claim, and in the mid 1890's the Will Hayes family would live in Pratt's house out there west of town. In 1889 Pratt sold these two lots to a couple Scandinavian fellows who held the lots purely on land speculation; the lots passed to the county for unpaid taxes in 1894.

E. H. "Ed" Rollins owned the next four lots to the north of Pratt's lots and operated a livery stable. In 1889 he sold three of his four lots to the Lincoln Land Company for $100, a little over $1 a foot of frontage, which was a rather good price by that point for land in the western part of Otis--since all the development was taking place by then over along Weld and Washington Streets in the Railroad Addition. For some reason, he held on to his fourth lot which went to the county for unpaid taxes in 1894.

Two of the liveliest lots in town were originally owned by Luther Wilson more or less in mid-block. Wilson operated a blacksmith shop on lots 20 and 21 and in February, 1888 sold his two lots for $107 plus another $107 for his blacksmith shop and its equipment. After that, Wilson moved to Akron, but the new buyer moved the building to another location to open a meat market. Ever afterward these two lots were tied together with the meat market lots and in the space of a year and a half all the involved lots exchanged hands four times. Wilson obtained title to his lots from the Washington County court on October 25, 1887, but he likely had been in business in this location for quite some time before that, possibly a year or more before that.

Daniel A. Kelley owned lots 22 and 23. Dan had located three miles west and one-half mile north of Otis and he held these lots purely on speculation. In fact, by 1888 he was living in Akron where he divorced his wife of less than two years, funding the divorce in part by selling these lots to the Otis banker, James Pruyn. Divorce in the Mountain states has always ran exceedingly high; in the 1880's the actual number of divorces in Colorado matched the divorces in Rhode Island--even though Rhode Island had ten times Colorado's population. In Dan's defense, let us note that his wife had deserted him.

(Pruyn's name is pronounced with a Germanic umlaut over the "u," so that it sounds as though it were spelled "Pryne," the way he is referred to in early histories where people guessed at the spelling based upon their memories how the name was pronounced.)

John M. Puntney owned the three corner lots on 2nd and Dungan where he ran a harness shop and sold coal. In May, 1888 he swapped lots with the Lincoln Land Company and relocated over into the Railroad Addition.

John had combined his legal perogatives under the land laws to claim two adjoining quarter sections. He pre-empted the northwest quarter of Section 6, Township 2 North, Range 50 West, which meant he filed on it, made certain minimal improvements, and a year later paid $1.25 an acre for it; that particular quarter is three miles west and two miles north of Otis. Immediately west of it is the northeastern quarter of Section 1, Township 2 North, Range 51 West, which was his homestead claim. His neighbors to the west out there were Effie and Frank Ridgley, whose children are buried in the Otis cemetery; a mile to his southwest was Luther Wilson, the blacksmith shop owner, and a mile south of him was Daniel Kelley, the deserted husband. It is very unlikely that it was purely coincidental that their town lots were side by side.

Now let us move on down the street to the intersection of 2nd and Dungan where we will gather on the school land west of the tennis courts.

THE WESTERN HALF, BLOCK 6, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

Block 6 is bounded by 2nd and 3rd on the south and the north and by Dungan on the west and Work Street on the east; because of the school, 3rd Avenue has since been vacated, but in the 1880's and 1890's it did come on through.

There was only one building on the western half of the block, and it was the first Presbyterian church. Today's Presbyterian church is the third building the congregation has occupied. The Presbyterian congregation was organized in May, 1887, and the Washington County court bestowed title to six 25 feet wide lots upon the Presbyterians October 5, 1887; shortly thereafter, construction of the building began. The building was not quite complete when the Presbyterians held their first worship service in it for Christmas, 1887. Until 1913 the Presbyterians worshipped on this spot.

The organizing pastor was the Rev. Allen FitzRandolph who came here from Hastings via Ogallala early in 1886 and took up a pre-emption claim two miles south and two and one-half miles west of Otis, also locating his daughter, Beatrice on a quarter section adjoining his to the southwest. FitzRandolph was more of an educator than a pastor and had at one time been county superintendent of schools somewhere back East. In March, 1887, when Washington County was being organized, the governor was going

to appoint the first county officers until elections could be held in November. A county-wide citizens meeting was held in Hyde as the most central point in Washington County (which included Yuma County at the time), and the citizens nominated Rev. FitzRandolph to be the governor's appointment as county superintendent of schools. However, FitzRandolph was a Republican and the governor was a Democrat, and the only Otis Democrat with sufficient sway with the governor to have secured the appointment for FitzRandolph anyway was out of state when the governor made the appointment, giving it to a Democrat. It was only after that fiasco that FitzRandolph proceeded to organize the Presbyterian church although he most certainly had been in the area for ten months by that time. Throughout most of the rest of 1887 he waged a one-man campaign to secure the Republican Party nomination to be superintendent of schools, but although he secured the backing of the Hyde editor, he lost out even on that. For one year in the 1890's his wife would be the teacher in the Otis school. In 1889 he and his family moved to town, just ahead of a two year drought; in 1890 in order to make ends meet, he also started serving the Yuma Presbyterian Church. In 1894 because of ill health, he retired to Boulder where he died and was buried in 1901; a well attended memorial service was held in Otis.

BLOCK 10, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

Block 10 is bounded by 2nd on the south, 3rd on the north, Dungan on the east, and Otis on the west; the western lots were vacated by the Lincoln Land Company in 1894--but the company was stuck with platted tax burdens on lots 5-10 on the eastern part of the block.

The corner two lots on 2nd and Dungan facing east onto Dungan were owned and never developed by John T. Crooks, a Hyde area pioneer. His first wife died and is buried in Hyde; he later married again.

The next two lots to the north were owned by Neils C. Jensen who later acquired the very corner lot in today's roadside park. Harvey Hodge paid Jensen $50, a $1 a frontage foot, for the lots in February, 1888, then swapped them with the Lincoln Land Company for lots in the Railroad Addition in January, 1889.

The Rev. Douglas Streeter, denominational affiliation unknown and immaterial because other than performing the wedding for George Dade's daughter, he engaged in no ministry in this area, owned the corner lots

on 3rd and Dungan where he and his wife, Emma, built a house. If anyone in Otis was even trying to grow trees in town at the time, it would have been Streeter who had a tree claim somewhere east of Otis where he was successfully raising mulberry trees. Streeter was a member of the first school board and had his land claim on the quarter section immediately north of Otis on the west side of the Sterling highway. In 1890 he moved to Weld County. He appears to have been a horse trader while he was located in Otis. The widow of Hammy Stewart occupied the house in the mid-1890's.

Now let us move down to the fence around the athletic field at which point we will be standing opposite the intersection of 3rd and Dungan.

THE PARK BLOCK/BLOCK 11, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

Originally Dade had dedicated this block to serve as a park, but less than two months later he changed his mind. The block as originally platted was bounded by 3rd on the south and 4th on the north; 4th at the time did come on through and, indeed, joined up with an "L" shaped county road which ran half a mile west of town, then a mile north giving those land owners a private drive into town. On the east the block is bounded by Dungan and on the west by Otis. The Lincoln Land Company did not acquire any land in this block which was not subdivided into lots anyway; however, some Nebraska people and a Des Moines firm got burned by acquiring these lots on land speculation from Dade. To the north of this block was Block 12, a half block deep running between 4th and the northern town limits; there was a similar quarter block to its west and two similar half blocks to its east; all those semi-blocks ultimately were acquired and vacated by the Lincoln Land Company.

The Rev. George W. Dungan was the reason Dade decided not to use this block as a park. Dungan was already working in Otis in May, 1886 to organize a Congregational church; the very first title to any land in Otis was bestowed by the Weld County court to the Congregational trustees for the entire southeast quarter of this block, fronting on Dungan. That title was given in January, 1887, and it was fortunate the court saw fit to do that: the church was built in November, 1886, using seasoned lumber provided by early lumberman, Josiah P. Edwards. (Another early lumberman, Theodore L. Van Artsdalen, sold the Presbyterians unseasoned lumber which caused so many repair problems across the years that the Presbyterians finally tore their first church down and built another.) The Congregationalists acquired so much skill in building their church that when the Presbyterians were building a year later, the Congregational carpenters came over to help them put on their roof.

The church apparently stood on the corner and to its north was the parsonage. There is no information when the parsonage was built. In 1910 the church was sold to the Methodists who moved it to the location of today's Presbyterian church. When the Methodists outgrew the building, it was moved to the corner where today's Conoco station stands where it was used as a grocery store. Later it was moved across the street and somewhat east where it was used as the slaughter house of a meat market. Today it is owned by Valley Feed and is used as a machine storage shed. It still has the original tin ceiling in it and is the only complete building in town from before the turn of the century. In November, 1986, it will be 100 years old; Josiah P. Edwards certainly did provide the Congregationalists very good lumber; most of the wood in the building is the original wood. We will see that building before we are done.

WESTERN HALF, BLOCK 7, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

Almost certainly although it cannot be proved one way or the other, George E. Smith built a house on the corner of 3rd and Dungan and perhaps originally ran a business out of the building; he later had a flour and feed business in Otis. Smith was one of the earliest arrivals in 1885 and loaned Dade the money he needed to prove up on his intended pre-emption. **Smith's pre-emption** was four miles north and three miles east of Otis. Smith held onto his lots, which now form the western part of the school's athletic field, until 1897 before allowing them to go to the county for unpaid taxes. By that point, if not earlier, he was living in Akron; he later moved to St. Francis, Kansas, and sometime shortly after the turn of the century, he moved to Yuma at which point he vanishes from history. He is mostly known for moving his son's body, the body of Bertie Smith, from an unknown place to the Otis cemetery, apparently in the expectation that in time he and his wife would be buried with their son; they were not.

Now if we can, let us cut through the athletic field and wind up on Work Street midway between 3rd and 4th. Those who are driving may wish to go back down to 2nd and come east to Work, and then north again.

Oh, if you are wondering, the rest of the lots on the west side of Block 7 were Dade lots which eventually became Lincoln Land Company lots which were abandoned by the company to the county for unpaid taxes. And if you were wondering about the rest of the lots in the western half of Block 6 to your south, they were owned, but never developed, by Rebecca Pruyn, wife of the banker.

THE EASTERN HALF, BLOCK 7, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

To locate us, this block was originally bounded by 3rd on the south and 4th on the north, Work on the east and Dungan on the west; today it is the school's athletic field.

Work Street, incidently, was named for George Work, the first settler in this area. Dade thereby sought to honor Work, but Seeley and the Lincoln Land Company claimed Work himself locating him in a real estate business in the Railroad Addition.

The north half, three 50 feet wide lots, of this block was owned by Elmer Sims, "the tall man from Otis," as the Hyde newspaper characterized him. He was an associate partner with James Pruyn in a feed and seed business and in November, 1886 became the second editor of the Otis Enterprise. He held that position until June, 1887 ; he had been appointed clerk of court and had increasing responsibilities in Akron. In 1888 he sold his southern most lot, more or less in midblock, to Charles E. Louk with the provision that Sims was to retain use of a small barn on the lot. Instead Louk brought up Luther Wilson's blacksmith shop, tacked it onto the barn, and converted the entire enterprise into a meat market. Sims eventually filed suit against Louk to reclaim his barn, but in the meanwhile Louk had moved to Minnesota and sold the lot and its buildings to Walter Henderson; Sims won the suit, but it seems he never was able to reclaim his barn.

George W. Cameron owned the southern three lots as well as the two lots across the street ; on one or the other corner, he had his jewelry and watch repair business. Cameron was the Democrat who was out of state when the governor appointed temporary county officials and did not appoint Rev. FitzRandolph as county superintendent of schools. The reason he was out of state was because he also operated a jewelry and watch repair business in Hastings--as well as in a Colorado mountain community; by 1888 he was more associated with Yuma than with Otis, yet his lots were the only ones west of the Sterling highway in private ownership which did not go to the county for unpaid taxes. In 1896 Cameron sold his lots to A. L. Fuchs of whom nothing more is known.

THE WESTERN HALF, BLOCK 3, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

We have already discussed the southern two lots owned by Cameron.

The next lot to the north, just south of the middle of the block, was owned by Ida Deacon, a young woman originally from Indiana, who had filed a pre-emption claim four miles south and three miles west of Otis. Her brother came to visit and met Beatrice FitzRandolph, daughter of Rev. FitzRandolph, and very soon Alfred Deacon made Beatrice FitzRandolph his wife. They returned to Indiana where Beatrice died 15 months later. It is not clear if Ida had a home on this lot, although it is more likely than not. In time she sold her quarter section and this lot to her father and by 1891 was listed as a resident of Arapahoe County where possibly she had moved to exercise her homestead claim rights; at the time Arapahoe County extended to Kansas from the Denver area and began ten miles south of Otis on the base line--which is to say Ida may not have moved very far.

The corner lots on the north were owned by Timothy R. Braden, the 1888 Otis constable; he apparently did not develop the lots but instead held them on speculation. In 1893 they had already reverted to the county for unpaid taxes, some of the very earliest lots to default to the county.

Now let us reassemble briefly at the south edge of the school after which we will proceed to the corner by the tennis courts.

THE EASTERN HALF, BLOCK 6, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

Back when 3rd came through, it served as the northern boundary of this block while 2nd served as the southern boundary, with Dungan on the west and Work on the east; the portion we are concerned with fronts on Work.

The northern corner, 3rd and Work, originally belonged to James W. Pruyn who sold it to Simms S. Towner in December, 1888 who sold it to Calla V. J. Dorland in March, 1890; Dorland held on to those two lots until 1901 before letting them go the county for taxes. That may indicate a house sat on the lots and was occupied; unfortunately, nothing is known of Dorland.

The Rev. Douglas Streeter acquired the next two lots to the south--approximately the corner of today's school--for speculative purposes in 1887, then deeded them to his wife a year later; two weeks later she sold them at her cost to Rev. Allen FitzRandolph, the Presbyterian pastor, who had merely to walk out his back door and a little to the south to be to his church. Many bums travelling through hobo-style on the railroad stopped at FitzRandolph's to get a meal; Mrs. Jane FitzRandolph fed all

of them but devotedly believed a person ought to work for what he got; she wanted a cistern, and made all the bums work on it until it was completed. Three years after the FitzRandolphs moved to Boulder, they sold the house to V. T. Hutchinson who for years operated the railroad's well pumping system.

While we are standing here, let us look across the street to the western half of Block 2, Original Town of Otis.

The corner three lots were owned by John Denholm, who served as cashier in James Pruyn's First Bank of Otis. In 1890 he was elected justice of the peace for the Otis precinct, and the following year he began service as county treasurer, moving to Akron in the process. While he lived in Otis, his home was located on one of these lots.

The next two lots to the south on the east side of the street were owned by Edmund White; he held on to the lots until 1897 which possibly indicates he was living on them.

The rest of the lots on the east side of the street down to the corner of 2nd were vacant, held on land speculation by various owners.

Now let us move down to the corner by the tennis courts before considering the rest of the block fronting on Work between 2nd and 3rd, for until we get down toward the corner, the rest of the lots on the west side of the street were vacant.

A plat of original Otis drafted in December, 1886 showed what seems to be a single building covering two and one-half lots on the corner of 2nd and Work. That was not quite the case. The two 25 feet wide lots on the corner housed James Pruyn's feed and seed store which also doubled as the 1st Bank of Otis. In May, 1886 John Holt had built a residence just north of Pruyn's store; by the time the Washington County court bestowed titles in the fall of 1887, Pruyn owned Holt's home. It was small enough Pruyn may have used it as a storage building while he and his family lived over the top of his store.

THE EASTERN HALF, BLOCK 5, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

This block lies between 1st and 2nd; the part we are concerned with is the west side of the street fronting on Work--the main business district of Dade's development.

The northern corner of the block originally housed the Otis Enterprise when it was first owned by Bartan Harlaw, who, incidently, later on served a year's political appointment as the Otis postmaster. He turned 25 in 1886. Upon his "retirement," since the townsite was still in court custody, he quit-claim deeded the lot and building to Rebecca Pruyn, the banker's wife, who was the legal owner while Elmer Sims edited the newspaper. When Sims quit, James Pruyn himself briefly edited the newspaper at this site. In 1888 Rebecca sold it to Etta Broege who sold it a year later to a Hastings man, George Delagneau; however, it appears from the records that either it was a very small building or that the building had been moved from the lot before Rebecca sold it.

The third lot to the south was owned by Dr. William D. Otis who arrived in Otis in the summer of 1887, fully a year and a half after a post office named "Otis" was started here, more than five years after the railroad named a siding at this location "Otis." He became the third publisher and fourth editor of the Otis Enterprise, and it is possible Harlaw's original building was part of the deal Otis and James Pruyn made in August, 1887, Otis moving the building from the corner to this lot. Less than a year later, Otis swapped his lot with the Lincoln Land Company and moved over into the Railroad Addition.

To facilitate matters, now please look to the eastern side of the street, which causes you to look at the western half of Block 1, Original Town of Otis. The corner two lots were held on speculation by Theodore L. Van Artsdalen; in the next two lots, directly across the street from Doc Otis' newspaper, was the barber shop of E. R. Brim.

Now let us move on to midblock gathering in front of the town pump house.

On the west side of Work just slightly to the north of the town pump house and indeed involving some of it were two 25 feet wide lots owned by George E. Smith; one reason to believe he had a home on the corner of 3rd and Dungan is because those lots did not go to the county until 1897--but these lots went to the county in 1895. If Smith began his flour and feed business out of his home early on, his business operation by the fall of 1887 was located here.

Directly in midblock on the west side of Work is probably the most famous lot in town, one which you would be asked about if you were taking

a history test. It is Lot #7, Block 5, Original Town of Otis, and it is the only lot on which the Lincoln Land Company ever made a significant amount of money. Dade had retained possession of the lot when he went back to Hastings in early 1888. Eventually the lot passed into possession of Nebraska man, L. B. Palmer, who sold it and numerous other lots to the Lincoln Land Company in 1889. The Lincoln Land Company in turn sold it for $1,000, well over twenty times as much as any other 25 feet wide lot brought; the purchaser was the railroad. This compounds problems of early history--for people who did not have their own wells bought their water from the railroad for about fifty cents a barrel, but the railroad had with this purchase two wells--one located west of the road west of today's liquor store and this one, both operated by V. T. "Hutch" Hutchinson. In time the well near the railroad caused typhoid fever in some people--somewhere along toward 1910--and all drinking supplies came from this well. This is the well that Dade and the other 1886 citizens hired J. E. Yeamans and J. W. Tillett to dig in July, 1886; by January, 1887, Yeamans still had not been paid by the Otis citizens and he filed suit against all of them. Of course, his timing was very bad: the well ran dry in December, 1886. There is a slight error in there: the well had been dug somewhat earlier; Yeamans and Tillett erected the windmill for the well. When the Town of Otis incorporated, the railroad sold the well to the town with the provision that the town would ever thereafter provide free all the water the railroad should ever need for railroad operations and for a stockyard which the railroad had here at the time. Lawyers would have to figure out whether the railroad could come in today and establish a feed lot and demand free water, but it would seem if this well is being used at all, the railroad could do it and get away with it.

Incidently, this well ran dry every winter, and presumably when it did, the citizens had the railroad bring up yet another tank car full of water from Hyde until they could get it dug deeper and flowing again.

Josiah P. Edwards, if we may turn our attention to the east side of the street, was located directly across the street from George Smith's flour and feed business. Edwards was a lumber man and served as justice of the peace in 1888.

Directly across the street from the town well was Arthur Brady's feed and seed store. Brady came to Otis from New York State with his widowed mother; in 1906, years after moving away from Otis, he ran for county treasurer of Washington County--and lost. He swapped his lot in June, 1888 with the Lincoln Land Company and moved to the Railroad Addition.

Harvey Hodge owned the next two lots south of midblock on the east side of the street; he held them purely for speculation and swapped one of them with the Lincoln Land Company in May, 1888 as part of the deal resulting in his moving to the Railroad Addition.

The rest of the lots on down to the highway were speculation lots owned by Theodore L. Van Artsdalen.

Back on the west side of the street, just south of the town well was the two story drug store owned by Samuel and Marilla Hoopes; it was built in May, 1886. Hoopes also relocated to the Railroad Addition. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hoopes are buried in the Otis cemetery.

While we are discussing matters medical, this might be an appropriate place to pause to consider that Dr. William D. Otis was not the town's first doctor. That honor went to Dr. O. V. Young who was certainly in Otis by September, 1886; his stay apparently was quite brief because there is no other mention of him.

Immediately south of the drug store was a little shack housing the Hastings House, a cafe originally located in Hyde, owned by business partners, the Misses Abagail Hanna and Mary Anderson. Mary shared a sodhouse claim shack with Beatrice FitzRandolph; the soddie was built on the property line so both girls could claim they were living on their respective pre-emption claims. Just south of Mary's claim was the claim of Will Hayes, a young man she had met in Hyde--and beyond his claim to the south was Ida Deacon's claim. Will and Mary married in 1887 and bought out Miss Hanna's share of the cafe. The cafe has a certain prominence beyond just being a cafe: the Presbyterian congregation was organized in that cafe in May, 1887; Abagail Hanna was a charter member of the Presbyterian Church. In time the building was moved to the Platner area.

South of the cafe and sitting on the corner of today's highway and Work was a fairly substantial sized hotel owned by Mrs. Mary Brady, the widowed mother of Arthur Brady, the feed and seed man located across the street in midblock. Mary was a charter member of the Presbyterian Church, too, and was quite a scrapper in and out of court either because she had filed suit or suit had been filed against her. Across the years she apparently leased operation of the hotel to various people, usually women, while she managed her ranch one mile north and one mile east of

Otis. Well into the 1900's she was reported living in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Her hotel was located on this spot prior to May 1, 1887, but how much before is anyone's good guess since land titles did not transfer from the court until the fall of 1887; it is known it was here before May, 1887 because Dade floated a loan from the bank on that date listing the properties in the townsite which were not in his possession at that time.

Now let us gather in front of Bud Kuntz's house near the intersection of the Sterling and Akron highways.

THE VERY FIRST STORE IN OTIS: ITS FIRST POST OFFICE

Erastus Orren Seeley started in the Newton, Iowa area and probably like many others from the Newton area first settled in Nebraska before coming on to Otis. By late 1885 he already had a grocery store sitting on the spot known now as 101 E. 1st, the Halcomb residence. The Halcomb residence itself was built sometime prior to 1920, but that is not Seeley's original building. Seeley was pre-empting that quarter section, and under the land laws, one could do almost anything one wanted on a pre-emption claim--except engage in commerical enterprise, which is possibly what caused Dade his title problems on his quarter section, too. Seeley seeing Dade's trouble moved his store from his quarter section when it came time for him to prove up, a process involving a move of a few feet either south, southwest, or west, any one of which would have put his store into another section. The most logical move would have been to come across the highway into Dade's development until after the land inspectors finished, but it is not known if he had access to land in Dade's development to do that, and there is no record where precisely he moved his store while the land inspectors were coming. In any event, if you are looking for the birth place of Otis, there it is. That was the first store; it was also the first post office and Seeley was the first postmaster.

Appointment as post master at the time depended which party controlled the federal government and the post office was located wherever the post master wanted it. Seeley was postmaster in 1887 and 1888; in 1889 the post went to Bartan Harlaw, formerly editor of the newspaper, and where Harlaw located the post office is anyone's guess because he owned no local commercial establishment. He had, however, acquired the unplatted parts of Seeley's quarter section and Harlaw's post office may have actually set outside any platted area of Otis. In 1890 Frank Brady, presumably another

of Mrs. Brady's sons, was postmaster, and likely the post office was in her hotel which was over in the Railroad Addition by then. In 1891 Perry Beeney was postmaster and the post office was in his general store in the Railroad Addition. The next recorded postmaster was H. J. Houston who in fact lived southeast of town but one would assume he made some sort of arrangement for a local post office in town. Rancher O. P. Smith followed Houston, and since Smith's ranch was well south of town, again one would assume some arrangement was made for a post office in town. Smith was replaced by Archie Knox in 1898, a happy choice because Knox was the depot agent and that was the location of the post office. When the railroad transferred him, the next postmaster was William Whitehurst who located the post office in his general store where it remained for many years.

As we turn our attention to the west side of the Sterling highway, keep in mind that the strip of land where the Halcomb residence sits all the way to the northern city limits was an unplatted no-man's land separating the warring townsites.

THE EASTERN HALF, BLOCK 1, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

The entire eastern side of Block 1 between 1st and 2nd fronting on Dade Street (yes, George Dade immodestly named the street for himself) was owned by Theodore L. Van Artsdalen, an early lumberman, who eventually relocated into the Railroad Addition. In 1890 after his wife sued him for divorce because of his brutality toward her, he deeded over nearly all his lots in Original Otis to her; she was never able to sell even one of them, and in time all the Van Artsdalen lots wound up the property of the county for unpaid taxes.

THE EASTERN HALF, BLOCK 2, ORIGINAL TOWN OF OTIS

This block is bounded by 2nd and 3rd and the part we are interested in faces east toward the highway to Sterling. It is easy to dispose of most of the first half of the block: the lots from the southern corner almost to midblock were owned by a variety of owners but never developed. Dr. Otis owned four lots beginning at midblock to the north, but also never developed them.

On the northern corner, the corner of 3rd and Dade, Quintin A. Dungan, brother of the Congregational minister, ran his feed and seed

store in 1886 and 1887; he had hardly received clear title to this property before he defected to Seeley's Railroad Addition. He deeded these lots over to his wife, Arabella (Poage) Dungan, in 1889; she was more commonly known as "Belle." Quintin in 1886 organized the Otis baseball team which handily defeated all comers--except Akron's team. At the time, baseball was a great fancy, and every community organized a team, and even country people organized teams, usually involving the men from half a township. Quintin was "the" sports enthusiast of Otis.

We can now dispose of the rest of the town of Original Otis in one sentence: the rest of the town was vacant. We have seen everything which was in Original Otis ever--and we have seen that virtually all the business establishments wound up in the Railroad Addition. After 1888 Original Otis was clustered around today's school: west of today's tennis courts stood the Presbyterian church, and across the street from it was Rev. Douglas Streeter's home; immediately behind today's school stood the Congregational Church and parsonage; in the southwest corner of today's athletic field stood, or possibly stood, George E. Smith's home; just north of the metal building on the east side of the athletic field was a meat market. George Cameron's building, inffequently occupied, stood east of the school. Rev. FitzRandolph's house stood about the southern corner of the school on the east. Possibly there were a couple other houses around that immediate vicinity.

I did not mention the section house which first stood across the road from today's liquor store. That was outside the plat of Original Otis--for the simple reason that it is in another section. It is not known when the railroad put in the section house; possibly it was as early as 1882. In 1887 the section foreman was an aged man named William Davison; he had served aboard the iron-clad ship, the U. S. S. Monitor, during the Civil War. The Otis Enterprise editor, at the time Elmer Sims, could not understand why the U. S. government would not give him a pension so he could retire. Throughout most of the 1890's the section foreman was Will Jones whose wife is buried in the Otis cemetery.

Now we have a bit of hiking ahead of us because we need to wind up down in the block bordering the highway on the east between 5th, if 5th came on through, and 6th. Those who are driving may want to go down to 6th and come back to park along the Arapahoe side.

EDUCATION IN EARLY DAY OTIS

We are now standing on the site of the first public school in Otis as we stand in the vacant lots in the half block wide strip of land between the Sterling highway and Arapahoe with 6th on our north. If you look around, you may find the foundation of that first public school.

This is not, however, the site of the first school; you have already seen that.

By March, 1887 enough families with children had located in this area that there was a demand for a school. Unfortunately the demand coincided with when the state legislature had decfeed the formation of Washington County and the governor had not yet appointed county officials, so the citizens had no one to turn to in order to obtain legal authority to establish a school district. A citizens meeting was held; the location of the meeting was not specified but the largest building in town at the time was the Congregational Church which, you will remember, sat on the north corner of 3rd and Dungan. Rev. George Dungan was elected to preside over the meeting. When the meeting ended, the citizens had created a private school to be known as the Otis Academy with classes to be conducted in the Congregational Church, and classes began right away for the spring of 1887. There is no record who taught in the Otis Academy that spring of 1887 or throughout the 1887-88 school year, but the school board was presided over by Rev. George Dungan. Others on the school board were the Rev. Douglas Streeter, Mrs. Annie Taggart, George W. Dade, and George F. Work. That private school still stands; the first public school does not.

Obviously the citizens were reasonably content with their private school inasmuch as they kept it going a year longer than they would have had to, but by the school year of 1889-90, a public school had been built--on this location in the no-man's land strip separating the two feuding townsites. The school paid $25 each to Seeley and the Lincoln Land Company for the land, a 300 feet long frontage. If there is any record of the first public school board, it must be in school files; none exists in county records. The school building was a two story affair; the second story was never finished and served as a public meeting room and for public dances and parties. At no time certainly prior to 1912 was there more than one teacher in the school; males were designated as "principal," females simply as "teacher." The first teacher was A. B. Craig who stayed for two years. He was followed by S. G. Daley in 1891 who likewise stayed for two

years. Mrs. Jane FitzRandolph, wife of the Presbyterian preacher, served as teacher in 1893. George M. Houston whose family was located southeast of town was teacher in 1894. Charles Shedd, John Patterson's grandfather, taught in the school in 1895 and 1896. Jessie Boatwright, obviously a man since he was designated as "principal," taught in 1897. Alta Irwin was teacher in 1898 and 1899. Katie Ferry was next in 1900, and she was followed by Kirby Lafe in 1901. W. H. Holt was teacher in 1902 when this research ended.

If anyone is interested in assembling a full list of teachers, and if such information does not exist in school records, it can be found in the volumes of the Colorado Business Directory on file with the State Historical Society in Denver.

Before leaving the school, we ought to look at a rather unpleasant incident involving the school board election in May, 1902. The railroad depot agent, A. W. Vetter, was elected secretary of the school board along with other members much to the chagrin of the Akron newspaper correspondent in Otis who used his column in the Akron paper to denounce how the election was held. Specifically he was outraged that there was no ballot box and the poll was only open for 15 minutes. The next week Vetter retorted that there most certainly was a ballot box and the poll was open until four o'clock and if his party had won, it had done so "fair and square." That led to two fistfights in Otis the next week, and the Akron "Pioneer Press" commented that at least the whole business would give Otis people "something to talk about besides crops and cattle." However, the Pioneer Press editor said he was tremendously unhappy that his Otis correspondent had used his news columns to spread a lie and he fired the Otis man.

Those familiar with the later history of the community can state when that first school was torn down. The impression is that it was some time around 1920; briefly while the new school, today's high school, was being built, senior high classes were held upstairs over today's Senior Center.

We are now going into the Railroad Addition. The easiest way to do this is to go over and assemble in front of the Presbyterian manse. Before going, we should understand that the Railroad Addition came all the way north to 4th--but development never got beyond 3rd and most often did not even get that far.

BLOCK FOUR, RAILROAD ADDITION

In the land division between Seeley and the Lincoln Land Company, for the most part, Seeley sold every other lot to the Lincoln Land Company; almost all the development, however, took place on Seeley's lots. Nothing whatsoever was developed in this block which is bounded by Arapahoe on the west, Weld on the east, 4th on the north and 3rd on the south.

The Lincoln Land Company tended to name streets for political divisions within the state being entered by the railroad. Thus Yuma's main street is actually and legally known as Weld in honor of the county which controlled this area when Yuma was being developed, and Akron's main street is known as Greeley Avenue; the main street in Otis is Washington after the county which was being formed as the Lincoln Land Company platted the Railroad Addition with Seeley.

The only thing of interest in this block is the lot where the Presbyterian manse stands, 301 Weld. Seeley swapped this and several other lots with George F. Weed, the developer of Yuma. Seeley was able to sell his Yuma lots; Weed got burned on his Otis lots.

THE WESTERN HALF, BLOCK 3, RAILROAD ADDITION

This block is bounded by 3rd on the south, 4th on the north, Washington on the east, and Weld on the west, and it is the western half we are concerned about. Urias M. Dustman was a speculator who built buildings on speculation--and then was unable to pay his creditors when they did not sell fast enough. While only two such buildings are documentably true, it is possible Dustman built two buildings facing Weld in this block. If so, one stood the second lot south of the corner of 4th and Weld. The other is much more certain, for David R. Day had his home and 1889 justice of the peace office on the corner of 3rd and Weld. Day defaulted on notes owed to Arthur Brady--who in turn defaulted on notes he owed the bank, and by 1891 both the original Dustman properties in this block were owned by the county, acquired for unpaid taxes.

While we are standing here, look over to the corner where John Boltjes lives; the lot just south of there was another Urias M. Dustman speculation acquired by the druggist, Samuel Y. Hoopes; there almost certainly was a house there which Hoopes employed as rental property. Two

lots farther south is another Dustman speculation, but dubious whether it had a building on it.

From here we wish to wind up on the corner of 2nd and Arapahoe.

BLOCK 5, RAILROAD ADDITION

Dr. Calvin C. Chapman, who practiced finances much more than he did medicine, acquired the corner lot on 2nd and Arapahoe in late November, 1889, where he built a part two-story, part one-story house. The two story part fronted on 2nd and Ron Haverland who lives across the street has a picture how the house looked at that time. The wooden garage behind the mobile home on the lot today was the one story part of Dr. Chapman's home and is the second oldest building still standing in Otis today.

Chapman originally meant to settle in Yuma when he came to this country and bought a home there and a quarter section of land east of Yuma. However a few weeks later he came over to the Otis area and took up a pre-emption claim two and one-half miles due south of town, locating Mary Chapman, possibly a maiden sister, on the quarter section adjoining his to the southwest. He immediately opened a farm loan business. 1889 was a drought year, and after the virtually non-existent harvest that year, the Pruyn family decided to clear out and sold their bank to Dr. Chapman. Dr. Chapman died quite unexpectedly in 1896, leaving a pregnant widow behind; when she gave birth, it was his only son named in his honor. Dr. Chapman is buried in the Otis cemetery; his wife, Lucy, may lie in an unmarked grave beside him.

The home eventually was acquired by William Whitehurst who is also buried in the Otis cemetery.

The lot two lots north of the corner was acquired by Bessie Coal in 1891 and did not go to the county until 1896, possibly an indication she lived in a house on that lot.

The rest of the west half of this block was vacant; west of it is the no-man's strip; all the lots on the south of this block were also vacant. So let us reassemble at the corner of the city park.

This block featured 50 feet wide lots, and the first two lots on the corner of 2nd and Weld were acquired by James W. Pruyn in the land

swaps with the Lincoln Land Company plus paying Seeley $140 for the very corner lot. Pruyn apparently was freaked out by having so much frontage, so he subdivided his lots into four 25 feet wide lots, selling the northern most lot to his cashier, John Denholm. Denholm apparently built a house on the lot for which he paid $50; in 1890 while he was living in Akron, Denholm quit-claimed it to Edmund White for $225, an indication there was some sort of improvement upon the lot. The rest of the block facing onto Weld was vacant.

Looking across the street to what today is Wayne Brandon's home, Ed Rollins bought that lot from Seeley with a completed building on it for $150. Rollins subdivided the lot creating a western half of the lot and an eastern half of the lot. Rollins had a pool hall on the western half and the eastern half plus the lot north of it held the corral for a stable that fronted on Washington.

Without walking down there, let us consider the block south of us which is Block 12 of the Railroad Addition.

Where the Presbyterian Church stands today was the location the Hodge brothers brought their livery stable from west Otis; Noah R. Pratt entered into partnership with Harvey, Levi apparently having dropped out of the picture. The business collapsed under the droughts of 1889 and 1890.

Down where the Conoco station stands today was the blacksmith shop of James "Hervey" Stewart, the man who donated the land for the cemetery. He and his family eventually moved to Brush.

On the eastern side of Weld in the block which runs from the highway to 2nd is block 11 of the Railroad Addition.

Josiah P. Edwards brought his lumber business to the three lots from the highway into the middle of the block over from west Otis. In October, 1888 he sold out to his competitor, Theodore L. Van Artsdalen, after which Edwards disappeared from Otis history. A few months later Van Artsdalen knocked his wife down and kicked her, and she filed for divorce, bringing down all of Van Artsdalen's creditors upon him. His father back in Pennsylvania plowed in thousands of dollars to save his son, but by the end of the year Van Artsdalen had moved to Wichita Falls, Kansas and the lumber company was leased to various firms for the next three or four years before it folded.

Fifty feet in from the corner of 2nd and Weld on the east side of Weld was another Dustman speculation property; however, Dustman did not get a building put up on it. Frank Ridgley whose homestead was west and north of town and whose children are buried in the cemetery bought the lot; it is not known if he ever developed it. He died quite young leaving a widow, Effie nee Mitchell. She eventually married a Cactus Valley area rancher named Avery.

Now let us go over to 2nd and Washington.

EASTERN HALF, BLOCK SIX, RAILROAD ADDITION

This block runs between 2nd and 3rd on the south and north and Weld and Washington on the west and east; the part we are concerned with fronts on Washington.

From all indications, the corner 25 feet wide lot never was developed; it was held by the Pruyn financial interests on speculation.

In May, 1888, Seeley sold the next lot north to Theodore L. Van Artsdalen who apparently had been a silent partner with Ed Rollins in running the Pennsylvania Stables on this site with the corral out back where Wayne Brandon's house is. On the same day, Van Artsdalen sold it to Henry C. Beck who continued to operate a stable on this site until early in 1893 when it was acquired by Wilson Thompson. However, Wilson apparently had been running the stable since 1891. Meanwhile Beck's had gained control over a hotel which Mrs. Thompson was operating as a boarding house. 1896 is the last year any stable is listed as in operation in Otis.

Next door to the north of the stable was another Van Artsdalen property, which he had picked up for a nominal $1 from the Lincoln Land Company. He likely started a business on that site which the WCTU had vowed would never build in Otis--a saloon; whatever he built on it sold for $1,500 in 1889--$500 more than the town well brought. Sylvester Haws, a known liquor dealer, bought it in 1889 and the next year sold it to James A. Robertson who at the same time acquired the meat market over in Original Otis. Robertson seems to have run the meat market and leased out the saloon.

That saloon figured into the most notorious crime ever committed in Otis. On March 13, 1890 five women--Mrs. Allen FitzRandolph, Mrs. George

Dungan, Ruth FitzRandolph, Mrs. Erastus O. Seeley, and Mrs. William Hensel broke into the saloon, armed with hatchets, and proceeded to chop the place to pieces, destroying the liquor supply while they were at it. The saloon man, A. K. Badger, maintained in his criminal damage suit against the women that they had destroyed $35 worth of booze, thereby costing him $500 worth of business, and in any event they put him out of business for two months.

The women had a novel defense in court: they admitted everything without pleading guilty, then their attorney asked the court if Colorado law does not specify that the plaintiff in a suit must post bond in real property in case he lost and had to pay court costs. Yes, Colorado law does--and did--have just such a requirement, and then the women's attorney inquired if the plantiff had done so, expressing concern whether he could do so. Upon that, Rev. FitzRandolph, husband of one of the defendents and father of another, and soon to be an in-law to yet another defendent, took the stand and testified to his certain knowledge A. K. Badger did not own an inch of property in Colorado and could not post any bond unless it was fraudulent. You see, Robertson owned the property and Badger only leased it. Rev. FitzRandolph also expressed concern about Badger's state of mind and advised the court that he was greatly worried because "plaintiff is so unsettled as to endanger officers of the court" if they did attempt to secure a bond from him. The case was dismissed.

By June, 1890 Badger had reopened his saloon and barber James Biddlecom and William Hensel, husband of one of the earlier defendents, stole three signs from the saloon. Badger again filed suit and the case was again thrown out of court because he could not post bond.

It is not known how long the saloon ran; there never was any record of its being here outside court cases. However, the lot went for taxes in 1894 and one can presume that means the saloon was no longer in operation at that time.

The rest of the block seems to have been empty.

THE WESTERN HALF, BLOCK SEVEN, RAILROAD ADDITION

This block is bounded by 2nd and 3rd on the south and north and by Washington and Logan on the west and east; the part we are concerned with is on the eastern side of Washington; the eastern half of the block was never developed.

On the corner of 2nd and Washington where Lloyd Newbank's red building stands today was the drug store of Samuel and Marilla Hoopes after they moved to the Railroad Addition from Original Otis. Their new two-story drug store was built here by Theodore L. Vanartsdalen who was winding up in all kinds of law suits for improper materials and construction. This was no exception: Van Artsdalen had plastered the interior and just after Hoopes moved in, down came the plaster, damaging and destroying the patent medicines Hoopes stocked. Hoopes flatly refused to pay Van Artsdalen and Van Artsdalen hauled Hoopes into justice of the peace court, first before David R. Day who lived east of the Presbyterian parsonage of today, but Hoopes asked for a change of venue alleging that Day was prejudiced. John Denholm, the bank cashier and apparently a second justice of the peace for the Otis precinct, heard the case and found in favor of Van Artsdalen. Hoopes appealed to district court and filed a counter suit asking $254.70 for damages to goods and furnishing for defective plastering plus an unspecified amount for delays caused in opening the business when Van Artsdalen was three months late installing counters. The case came up for trial on June 1, 1889, but Hoopes asked for a continuance, stating that his wife might die at any hour, and he could not attend court. His wife lingered almost until the end of the year, and the case was heard anyway. The jury found for Van Artsdalen but for only half what Van Artsdalen claimed.

Earlier it was erroneously stated that Bartan Harlaw did not own commercial property in Otis; that statement was in error. The 25 feet wide lot north of the drug store was empty, but the next lot originally was owned by Harlaw, but he did not own it the year he was postmaster. Instead Harlaw sold it to Francis A. Card who operated a harness and saddlery shop there until 1895.

The rest of this block was empty unless Minnie Smith had a home on her lot one hundred feet north of the 2nd and Washington corner.

However, look up into Pete Plum's lots where he has the old cars parked. The second lot in from the corner of 3rd and Washington was owned by John M. Puntney who had a harness and coal business there in 1888 after which Puntney vanished. It is utterly unknown what happened to the building. There was nothing else north of it nor east of it.

THE SECOND AND WASHINGTON INTERSECTION

Where the insurance company stands today was Perry Beeney's general

store and hotel. In 1888 Beeney was a partner in Seeley's general store, the same year he opened his general store here; Seeley, however, had sold his store and moved out into the country to take up a homestead claim. In 1890 Beeney sold out but apparently continued operating the hotel while others took over his general store; a J. B. Murray is shown operating a general store in 1890 and there is no other location in which he could have been. In 1893 Beeney's hotel was officially named the Beck Hotel, Henry Beck apparently leasing it from a Front Range owner, but the hotel was operated as a boarding house by Mary Thompson, wife of the stable owner, Wilson Thompson. In 1893 Beeney seems to have taken back over his former store and was now running it as a dry goods store. In 1894 Beeney moved to Akron where he remained a dry goods dealer for a good many years; it is not known what eventually became of Beeney. In 1897 a D. E. Cooper began operating the hotel; the last year the hotel was listed as in existence was 1899.

On the corner of 2nd and Washington on the west side of the street was the Clute Brothers' operation. William A. Clute was the resident agent for the Lincoln Land Company, but he seemed to engage more in property transactions which personally profitted himself than he did for the company. William Clute started a rival newspaper to Dr. Otis' "Otis Enterprise" as part of the townsite war, importing his brother, Andrew Clute, to operate the newspaper; that was in 1887. In 1888 the brothers added insurance and real estate loans to their operations. In 1889 Frank Gray was publishing the "Colorado Clipper," the Clutes' newspaper. William Clute fled ahead of a number of bills to the Indian Territory in 1889 and Andrew Clute continued real estate sales and added coal, apparently acquiring Puntney's coal bins in the process.

A 1912 drawing of the downtown area shows the only remaining structures were those coal bins which sat over toward the alley west of the corner of 2nd and Washington. Andrew Clute was gone by 1892. The printing press of the Colorado Clipper had been sold in 1890 and moved elsewhere.

THE EAST SIDE OF WASHINGTON BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND

We have already discussed Beeney's hotel and general store on the corner where today's insurance office is.

Next door to the south, 75 feet south of the corner or about where today's hardware store is, was Doc Otis' building housing the Otis Enter-

prise. To the extent that he had a doctor's office, this was its location; however, in those days, doctors went to their patients much more than their patients came to them. Dr. Otis was a charter member and one of the two initial ruling elders of the Presbyterian church; for awhile he served as county coroner. In 1892 he sold this lot to Betsey J. Alden, and the purchase price would indicate that the printing press was gone before the land sale. In 1894 he moved to Fort Morgan with his wife, daughter, and mother-in-law; in Fort Morgan he helped organize the Community Betterment League and the Masonic Temple and was a partner in a drug store with one of Hervey Stewart's offspring (Hervey had been blacksmith in Otis). All the Otis family is buried in Fort Morgan. It is not known what Betsey Alden did with the lot, but it went to the county in 1898.

The lot immediately south of today's hardware store was owned by Ansel S. Forbes; the lot was never developed. Forbes was editor of the Hyde newspaper and yet another person originally from Hastings; he held this and several other lots in town for speculation purposes.

The next lot south of it was an undeveloped Lincoln Land Company lot.

The first land sale in the Railroad Addition was to Jennie Holt; Seeley sold her a lot with a building on it for $175 in October, 1887. That should read: "one of the first land sales was to Jennie Holt." There were two earlier sales on the west side of Washington. Jennie was wife of the John W. Holt who had built a house north of Pruyn's feed and seed store in Original Otis in May, 1886. John Holt bought the next lot to the south of Jennie's lot. It is not known what business, if any, the Holts ran on this property, and it is entirely possible they leased the building to other people; there was a barber shop somewhere along Washington which cannot be located, and perhaps the barber had leased the Holt building.

Beyond midblock going south toward the highway along the east side of Washington with a 50 feet frontage was the second location of Mary Brady's hotel which was named "The Merchants Hotel." She brought it over in 1888 and operated it in 1889. In 1890 Mrs. J. W. Mooney ran the hotel and Ellen Seeley, wife of the Railroad Addition developer, ran it in 1891. Mrs. M. C. Thompson who later would run the former Beeney hotel operated the Merchants Hotel in 1892. Mrs. Maggie Lamb, wife of a grocer and a grocer in her own right, operated the hotel in 1893, but Mary Brady was back running it in 1894. She was still running it when it went out of business in 1895, and that same year it went to the county for taxes.

Erastus O. Seeley had brought his grocery store up from 101 E. 1st to the west side of Washington Street in 1887 but sold it to Maggie Lamb in 1888 whereupon he and his wife, Ellen, moved to a homestead claim south of town, freeing him to engage in his real estate business. Ellen, however, got bored out in the country and bought a lot 75 feet north of the corner of 1st and Washington where she had Erastus erect a 20 by 40 feet building in which she operated a grocery store and Erastus made and repaired shoes. She sold the lot and building to Elmer Sims in 1892 for a $500 loss.

Right where the fire station was before it moved to the northern part of town was a lot owned by John M. Puntney who probably had his coal bins in Pete Plum's lots and operated his harness shop here. The Pruyn financial interests bought Puntney out in 1889 and it is unknown what the Pruyn's did with the rather substantial building located on the lot.

The corner now occupied by the Colorado Agricultural Coalitioh, once home of the Farmers State Bank and the Otis Independent, was a major coup for Seeley and the Lincoln Land Company. Seeley sold it to the original pioneer, George F. Work, who in partnership with Quintin Dungan operated a real estate business on this corner. When Dungan became more occupied with his feed, seed and furniture business, Work went into partnershipwith his son, Charles Work. Work originally was from Hastings.

THE WEST SIDE OF WASHINGTON BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND

Beginning up on 2nd, we have already discussed the Clute building. The next two lots to the south were vacant.

Arther Brady relocated his flour, feed and seed business to the lot approximately where the parking lot is south of the post office today. His business went under in the 1889 drought and his buildings were attached by the Pruyn financial interests and brought down to their lot roughly in the middle of today's parking lot. That was the location of their feed and seed business--and the 1st Bank of Otis. They sold it to Dr. C. C. Chapman in 1890, keeping back two buildings for themselves; it is not known what they did with the buildings--probably originally Arthur Brady's buildings--but a good guess is that they sold them to Quintin Dungan who had the third feed and seed business on the west side of Washington about the entrance

of today's bank.

Quintin Dungan led the defections from Original Otis. In September, 1887 he and Work started their real estate business on the east side of Washington, and in October, 1887 Dungan moved into a building Seeley had put up especially for him, purchasing the lot and building from Seeley for a mere $200, the cost of the building alone.

To follow up on these people, Arthur Brady moved in 1889 down toward the South Platte and remained in Washington County as a prominent rancher for years. The Pruyn family returned to Hastings in 1890 where they owned a mansion purchased from George Dade in 1887 as part of a deal getting him funding to develop Original Otis; the Pruyns were among the last to leave Original Otis to move to the Railroad Addition, in part because they owned a considerable number of lots in Original Otis on speculation. James and Rebecca Pruyn deeded their lots to their son, Albert, and daughter, Mabel, plus a couple quarter sections of land they had picked up--but all the lots went to the county for unpaid taxes. Dr. Chapman died in 1896; in 1903 his daughter, Eugenie, sold his lot to the Sullivan brothers who also operated a feed and seed business in that location--in addition to their large ranch south of town and the Bank of Wray which they started about that time. Quintin Dungan's business folded in 1894, but there is considerable debate if he left; supposedly he and Belle were living in Otis as late as 1896 and there is a possibility the two of them lie in unmarked graves in the Merrill-Dungan family plot in the Otis cemetery. Dungan's son, Fred, who married Ruth FitzRandolph, went to Firth, Nebraska in 1894 to run a similar business there, perhaps as his father's representative; in 1896, Fred and Ruth moved to Boulder to care for her father in his declining years.

TODAY'S BANK LAWN

As it can be said 101 E. 1st is the birthplace of Otis inasmuch as it housed the original location of Erastus Orren Seeley's store and the first Otis post office, so the lot represented by today's bank lawn can be said to be the birthplace of the Railroad Addition, the birthplace of today's business district--for it was to this location that Seeley moved his store when he launched the Railroad Addition.

His store was part two-story, part one-story. The two story part fronted on Washington; the family lived upstairs. In June, 1888 Seeley sold his store to Maggie and Nellie Lamb and by March, 1889 they had gone

into receivership--evidence the financial woes of the community were caused as much by overspeculation as by anything going on in the countryside, because that was months before the 1889 drought could have taken an impact.

The first people into the area--as was inevitably the case all over the West--came not for the land, but to get the land to resell at higher price, and literally hundreds of people flocked in with speculation as their sole aim. The speculators came in 1885 and 1886 and already by 1887 were re-selling the land. A Hyde pioneer sold his pre-emption, which cost him $200, for $800 to an incoming settler, then took that $800 to buy a virtually worthless quarter section of land in the sand hills, took title to that with him back to the Grand Island area where he sold it for $1,600, and thereby increased his investment eight-fold. Some quarter sections originally acquired for $200 went for $3,000 to $4,000. However, there was a price being paid--because as the speculators moved out, land titles were being acquired by people who had never seen the land and had no intention of even seeing it, much less occupying it. In other words, people were moving out as early as 1887, and not as the consequence of anything happening to agriculture; they were leaving with hundreds and even thousands of dollars profit in their pockets. Of course, as they left, even though genuine settlers were then coming in, it left fewer and fewer people to purchase goods and services in the towns. That was not immediately evident precisely because homesteaders were coming in--but in that very word was doom for many town businesses, for "homesteaders" came to live on the land and did not have the $200 it would cost to pre-empt the land, nor any excess cash to purchase goods and services in town. That their arrival in 1887 and 1888 preceded the 1889 and 1890 drought caused blame for the subsequent collapse of the towns to fall upon the droughts, but in the case of the Lamb grocery store, clearly the collapse was from speculation and not drought. It can also be wondered if speculation did not lead to the downfall of Arthur Brady's feed and seed store; by 1889 there were substantially less people actually living on the land, and it can well be wondered if enough people lived on the land to support three feed and seed businesses in Otis. By 1890 it was down to one feed and seed business after only one year of drought, but was the death of the other two feed and seed businesses the consequence of the drought--or the consequence of fewer people around to buy feed and seed? Brady went under because of financial collapse--but the Pruyns cut their losses and ran, incidently considerably richer for it in spite of the fact that they would ultimately lose all their Otis lots to the county. Two events closed the bank in 1896: Dr. Chapman's death was foremost but the bank might have closed anyway because Dr. Chapman thought Hyde was going to

succeed and Otis was going to fail; Chapman never speculated in Otis lots but acquired a considerable number of Hyde lots. The Otis bank weathered the 1890 drought, the 1893 drought, the 1894 drought, and the 1895 grasshopper invasion as well as the 1893 national financial crisis--only to fold in 1896, largely because Chapman guessed wrong which community would survive, and had not made provisions for the bank to continue if he died as he did.

To return to Seeley's store, in 1889 Albert Lamb, Maggie's husband, continued to operate what had been Seeley's store, Perry Beeney opened his store, and an outfit known as Coleman and Mann also had a grocery store in Otis--but where is anyone's good guess. Ed Brim and George Jameson also had barber shops somewhere along Washington, but where is again anyone's guess. There was also the meat market out by today's athletic field--and another at an unknown location operated by B. F. Roger. There also was an Episcopalian church, Father R. E. Howell, pastor, though the Episcopalians likely had no building.

By 1890 James Robertson, owner of the land and building occupied by the saloon, was running Seeley's store as a grocery and the meat market over in Original Otis, Beeney still had his grocery and general store, and J. B. Murray had a third grocery and general store. Possibly that third grocery was located on the Holt lots along the eastern side of Washington--or in the former Puntney/Pruyn building where the old fire station is located now. There were no other likely candidates where it could have been located.

In 1891 Beeney and Murray were still in business, Ellen Seeley was running the Merchants Hotel--and Erastus O. Seeley ran a grocery, meat market and shoe store in Ellen's store on the east side of Washington, his original store then again being in receivership. In December, 1891 Ellen wondered what to buy her husband for Christmas which would be especially meaningful--and she bought the site of his original store and gave it to him. In 1892 after proving up on their homestead, the Seeleys moved from Otis and sold all their remaining lots to the Lincoln Land Company--except one.

They kept Lot 12, Block 11, Railroad Addition--the site where the Railroad Addition got started, today's bank lawn. In time it went to the county for taxes and the Seeleys wound up in Oregon where he died in 1922 and 13 years later to the day she died.

Murray must have departed in 1892, too, because thereafter there was

only one grocery in town--Beeney's grocery. In 1894 Dr. Chapman's son-in-law, John M. Kutch, took over a grocery in town, and the fact that Beeney left that year for Akron would lead to the suspicion that Kutch's grocery was the former Beeney grocery which stood on the lot south of today's insurance company. In 1896 when Dr. Chapman died, Kutch moved on to unknown parts, although he was in and around Otis for the next six years as administrator of Dr. Chapman's estate.

A CATCH-ALL CHAPTER

On the southwest corner of 2nd and Logan's intersection sat a dwelling and outhouse built on speculation by Urias M. Dustman; S. Y. Hoopes, the druggist, acquired it as rental property, but there is no record to whom he rented it.

On the southeast corner of that same intersection of 2nd and Logan sat another house, originally built by Theodore L. Van Artsdalen on speculation. In 1888 James McHugh bought it and sold it to Edmund White in 1889. White also likely owned a residence across the street from today's high school, another more or less in the middle of today's city park, and this one, and therefore probably used two, if not all three, as rental properties.

Matilda Lomax acquired the second lot from the corner of 1st and Gilpin in 1890; it is possible she had a home there.

The only way to determine if a residence had been built on a lot is if the owner subsequently sold the lot for an appreciably higher price than he or she had paid for it, so it is possible there were other residences around town although we probably have identified very nearly all of them.

At its height, Otis had a population of 150; at its depth, it showed a population of 50, although that was likely the population of the Otis precinct in both cases, "Otis" not then being an incorporated town. The town never had an excessive number of buildings: the two churches (Congregational and Presbyterian; a Methodist congregation worshipped in the school until the mid-1890's picking up where the Episcopalians left off), the section house, the depot, perhaps half a dozen residences near today's high school, the meat market near today's high school, 3-5 residences on the west side

of the Railroad Addition, two stables, a pool hall, a blacksmith shop, one lumber company for most of the town's existence, a saloon, a drug store, two newspapers at its height, three grocery stores and a second meat market also at the town's height, two barber shops, three feed and seed stores at the height, two hotels, a saddlery, a harness shop, a real estate business and 2-4 residences east of Washington. That would show an unduplicated count of 39-44 buildings at the very height of the community; at its lowest, it got down to about 17 buildings according to the memoirs of old pioneers when the existence of known buildings are added to their exaggerated memories. The Washington business district was very nearly decimated as the town collapsed; Burdett area pioneer Elizer Pinney, sometimes a Methodist lay preacher in the Burdett area, came to town and bought up enough abandoned stores to build a 13 room house on his land out north, and since those stores were not very large to begin with, that accounts for nearly all those which disappeared. Old pioneers talk about the huge number of empty foundations; most of them came in much later and did not know that west Otis from 1887 on had a large number of empty foundations because those stores had moved over to the Railroad Addition. Because those who arrived later did not know that, they perpetually guessed the original population considerably higher than it ever was.

1889 was possibly the height of the development in Otis with 19 businesses and four churches listed in the Colorado Business Directory, and that directory was not necessarily complete because it did not include the saloon. In other years, known businesses were not listed. The depth probably was 1901, although there was little change in Otis from 1901 until around 1910 when the area again began to develop; in 1901, William Whitehurst had his general store and also sold coal--and that was the only business in town. A feed and seed operation got going a couple years later.

Out in the country, those who remained became cattle and sheep men; precious little farming was even attempted. Mary Brady's land claim became the headquarters of a 1,700 acre ranching operation, the A.D. ranch which either leased or outright purchased its acreage. Rev. Dungan leased his land to the A.D. operation. Dr. Otis held on to much of his property in the country, but did sell his homestead. He frequently came up from Fort Morgan both to practice medicine and to check up on his ranch; he often was accompanied by former Otis postmaster, Oliver P. Smith, also checking on his ranch. The fact that someone had moved away did not eliminate his or her continuing financial interests in the Otis area.

But move away they did. When Rev. Dungan moved away in 1905, not one

original townsperson remained. In all subsequent attempts to put together the history of Otis, only once was a townsperson consulted although some who had lived in the country, mostly those who were children at the time, were also consulted.

Otis was a quiet town from the beginning. The cattle trails passed near Hyde and Akron, and although country settlers had problems with longhorn steers, the town was spared the excitement of passing cowboys with their demands for saloons and other red-light features for which Akron, far more than Hyde, was notorious. Its location midway between Yuma and Akron saved the community from the collapse that overtook Hyde and later Plather. About 1920 the population got up to around 1,000 people; since the end of World War II, the population has hovered around 500, mostly the consequence of retired farmers moving into town. Even at 500, today's community is more than three times the size it was before the turn of the century.

Some few things were not seen or sensed about the town way back when. Some few homes would have developed their own wells and have been equipped with windmills. Most residences would have had a small barn in which to house the family horse and the family cow. A town boy would be hired to drive the cattle out into the country before school and to bring them home after school. Families did their own milking. Some would have had chickens and some would have even had a hog or two; Theodore L. Van Artsdalen had a meat market in Akron which specialized in hogs he raised on his country properties. (He also owned a two story building in Akron which served as the first Washington County court house.) Each home and business had an outhouse. Memories of pioneers in similar communities of that age always talk about the stench in town, and farm families could hardly wait to get back out into the country away from the stench and the flies.

Entertainment was not necessarily home-grown, though for the most part it was, and there probably was more community-wide entertainment in those days than now when we sit isolated in our homes hovering over television sets. At least monthly there would be a community party, usually in the school house, though sometimes scores of people would descend on a private home to celebrate an anniversary or birthday. Men greatly outnumbered women and women would arrive home exhausted, having danced every dance in addition to its being daylight before they got home; roads were non-existent and one got home crossing the prairie. Sometimes parties were announced as "moonlight parties," meaning if the moon was shining so people could leave at a

a reasonable hour, the party would be held. However, even then "reasonable" meant well after midnight: the Rev. George Dungan attended a party in a private home and entertained by singing old military songs until 1:30 a.m.

Fall ushered in many social events preparing for the winter, notably quilting bees; seemingly every day there was a quilting bee in someone's home and the men and children would come over in the evening to eat, to play cards, to sing, or someone might bring a musical instrument and there would be an impromptu dance. If children were not in school, they held contests to see who could gather the most dried cow chips; even families which could afford to buy coal liked the immediate heat burning cow chips brought--and those stoves burning cow chips and coal added to the pollution and stench associated with towns. Cisterns were replenished for the winter. Some of the men might take wagons up into the mountains to gather firewood.

Summer months saw organized picnics involving several families; a favorite picnic place in this area was to organize an outing to Fremont Butte, or to go as a group down to the Arickaree. The 4th of July almost always was observed, often with horse races; in 1902 Otis held a 4th of July celebration of such magnitude that Akron did not even bother to plan a celebration, and instead the Akron people either went to Brush or came to Otis.

Throughout its height, the community consistently supported three congregations. The Rev. James Rippetoe was stationed in Akron as the Methodist pastor, but also led worship for Methodist congregations in Otis and Hyde. Rev. George Dungan had congregations in Otis, Hyde and Burdett, plus leading worship in the Hope school. Rev. FitzRandolph served both Otis and Yuma. After Dungan retired in 1900, the Congregationalists had a series of ministers until about 1907. The Otis Presbyterians were served by pastors who also served Akron and Yuma after Rev. FitzRandolph moved to Boulder; the pastors lived either in Akron or Yuma and at least one of them got back and forth (Rev. Cameron) by bycycling. Burdett loved to joke about how one of its Congregational pastors got lost trying to find Burdett and had to be provided a guide thereafter. The minister himself did not think it was so funny and only stayed a few months. People flocked to their churches and sought excuses to have church social events, potluck meals at which the people could visit with one another; often they asked the other churches to join them. The Lutherans were in the area but primarily serving people of European extraction, which meant they were country people; at the first, they were served by a missionary stationed in McCook. The Catholics were in

the area, too. Nineteen of Yuma's leading businessmen were arrested by federal authorities in December, 1886 for burning down the home of a former Catholic monk. While the disposition of the case is not known, since they were arrested for violation of land laws, likely they were merely fined; certainly from their recorded presence on the streets of Yuma, they did not go to prison. The men made no attempt to deny having done it, and, in fact, were rather proud of themselves for it.

Otis was somewhat more of a tranquil community, its peace marred only by domestic violence, the women chopping up the saloon, and the fist fights over the school board election. To be certain, the Rev. James Rippetoe ran afoul of the law for shooting some long-horn steers as he journeyed back and forth between Akron, Otis and Hyde. He claimed, and the jury believed him, that he shot only in self-defense against enraged and charging, semi-wild livestock; enough settlers had encountered just exactly that situation that his claim was very believable--by settlers. The cattle baron noted, however, that Rippetoe and members of his flocks seemed to dine on an uncommon amount of fresh beef which they had not purchased. The first shooting in all of Washington County was not until 1902--and it involved a dispute over a cow. Mostly, though, when Otis area people had disputes with each other, they hauled each other into court, some spending so much time in court that one has to wonder how they tended either to their businesses or their farms. It kept a bunch of lawyers in Yuma and Akron in very lucrative business, though, and one of them--August Muntzing--in 1907 and later years started quietly acquiring title to as much land in Otis as he could; he died just about the time the town started rebuilding, and whether through incompetence or malpractice, the administrator of his estate awarded title to his daughter the same day he awarded title to a local purchaser--which kept the courts lively for awhile, but left Muntzing's daughter with precious little inheritance. (Muntzing originally practiced law in Yuma from which location he represented Theodore L. Van Artsdalen in his divorce and various financial suits; later he moved to Akron, and later still moved to Denver where he died.)

As early as 1890, it had to be obvious to town residents that the town was collapsing, but they did not seem to sit around wringing their hands crying in despair over it. They went on about their lives, scheduling community-wide parties and celebrations of such magnitude that larger communities, such as Akron, cared not to compete. Dr. Chapman might have concluded that Otis was going to die and instead invested in Hyde, but he sadly mis-

read the spirit of the Otis citizens. Even though eventually all the town citizens would move on, they left behind an embryonic community with some perpetuating traditions. One of those traditions is cooperation among religious denominations: the Congregationalists and Presbyterians way back when held joint revival services, marking in the congregations the unity the pastors' families had when Fred Dungan married Ruth FitzRandolph--or when the Revs. Dungan and FitzRandolph jointly buried Fred and Ruth's infant daughter, Faith, a name chosen not so much to characterize the daughter but rather to serve as an admonition to her grieving parents. Another perpetuating tradition was the "never say die" community attitude. Are land prices plummeting today? Doc Otis sold a quarter section for $40 which cost him $200. Are crop prices bankruptingly low? There were three years in a row when people in this area would have been on their knees thanking a merciful God if they could have had a crop, years during which men went to the Front Range or into the mountains or up into Wyoming seeking work, leaving their wives and children to manage as best they could here. Are businesses closing their doors, casting people out of work? Otis went from 19 businesses to one. All the while this was going on, when citizens got together, it was to plan the next community-wide event, sort of saying that "well, we can choose to be despondent or to enjoy ourselves, so let's enjoy ourselves." Over in Hyde, when the rail line was shifted to the south of town, the people cried, "oh, woe is us." In Otis when the railroad built its depot east of all development, the citizens packed up and moved buildings and all over to where the depot was, taking horrendous financial losses on their original properties.

If one measures from when development first started in this vicinity, Otis is already 100 years old--was 100 years old by May, 1986. If one measures from when George Dade filed his plat on Original Otis, Otis was 100 years old in September, 1986. If one measures from the townsite which conquared (the Railroad Addition), then Otis is 100 years old either in February, 1987, 100 years after Erastus Orren Seeley filed the plat, or in July, 1987 when Seeley sold his first lot in the Railroad Addition 100 years ago. The centennial will be held in 1987 to coincide with the Washington County centennial since it is difficult for a county, which is after all only a handful of officials, to have a celebration. It is only fitting that Otis host both centennials. After all, back in 1902 when Otis consisted of one grocery store and a handful of houses, Otis had the only 4th of July celebration in all of Washington County. It is not exactly the first time Otis has done something for the whole county.

Probably it won't be the last either.